

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMCONSUL PARAMARIBO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1609

USIA WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: OGEN, NS

SUBJECT: USIS PROGRAM, PARAMARIBO

REF: MEMORANDUM FROM USIS GEORGETOWN DATED APRIL 4, 1974,
BURKE-JOHNSTON TELECON, APRIL 9

1. I HAVE JUST BEEN NOTIFIED BY USIS GEORGETOWN THAT USIA HAS DECIDED TO ABOLISH THE USIS LOCAL EMPLOYEE POSITION IN PARAMARIBO BY JUNE 30, 1974. THIS IS DUE TO "THE NEED FOR WORLDWIDE BUDGETARY REDUCTIONS, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREAS OF PERIPHERAL PROGRAMMING." THE DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL THAT USIS-PARAMARIBO IS A SUB-POST OF USIS-GEORGETOWN. THE POSITION IN QUESTION IS THE ONLY USIS POSITION IN PARAMARIBO.
2. I DISAGREE MOST STRONGLY WITH THIS STEP AND REQUEST A REVIEW BY WASHINGTON AGENCIES OF THIS DECISION, WHICH WAS TAKEN WITH ABSOLUTELY NO NOTICE OR CONSULTATION WITH ANYONE AT THIS POST.
3. THE GOVERNMENT OF SURINAM HAS ANNOUNCED ITS INTENTION TO BECOME INDEPENDENT BY THE END OF 1975 (PARAMARIBO 065). THE CONSULATE IS RECOMMENDING THAT FOLLOWING INDEPENDENCE THE POST BE UPGRADED TO AN EMBASSY WITH A RESIDENT AMBASSADOR.

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WE ARE ALSO RECOMMENDING THAT THE USIS PRESENCE BE CONTINUED

ON AT LEAST THE SAME LEVEL. UPON INDEPENDENCE, SURINAM WILL ASSUME ADDED IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S. BECAUSE OF ITS VOTE IN INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, THE PROBABLE PRESENCE OF DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS WHICH MAY BE HOSTILE TO U.S. INTERESTS, AND THE GOS'S STATED INTENTION TO FOLLOW A "NEUTRALIST FOREIGN POLICY."

4. HOWEVER, EVEN IF INDEPENDENCE HAD NOT YET BECOME AN IMMEDIATE PROSPECT, U.S. INTERESTS HERE CLEARLY JUSTIFY THE CONTINUANCE OF THIS POSITION. THEY ARE (1) U.S. INVESTMENTS, AROUND DOLS 500 MILLION, AND (2) U.S. INTEREST IN CONTINUED ACCESS TO SURINAM BAUXITE. AFTER JAMAICA, SURINAM IS THE LARGEST PRODUCER OF BAUXITE IN THE AREA.

5. MY CONCERN WOULD NOT BE SO GREAT IF IT WERE MERELY A QUESTION OF ONE POSITION. IN THIS CASE, HOWEVER, ABOLITION OF THE POSITION WILL MEAN, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, THE END OF ANY USIS PROGRAM IN SURINAM. THE INTENTION IS EXPRESSED IN THE APRIL 4 MEMORANDUM TO "HANDLE AS MUCH AS WE CAN FROM GEORGETOWN" AND TO CONTINUE PERIODIC VISITS BY THE PAO AND THE INFORMATION OFFICER. THIS SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF MY OWN EXPERIENCE IN PARAMARIBO OVER THE PAST NEARLY FOUR YEARS, DURING WHICH VISITS BY ONE OR THE OTHER AMERICAN USIS OFFICERS HAVE AVERAGED TWO PER YEAR, EACH FOR TWO OR THREE DAYS DURATION. THIS IS IN NO SENSE A CRITICISM OF THESE INDIVIDUALS OR THEIR PREDECESSORS, WHO ARE CONSCIENTIOUS AND HARD-WORKING OFFICERS, BUT SIMPLY A RECOGNITION OF THE PRESSING DEMANDS ON THEM OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING THE GUYANA PROGRAM. THESE RESPONSIBILITIES ARE NOT LIKELY TO DIMINISH, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE PARAMARIBO REDUCTION, I ASSUME, HAS BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY EQUALLY STRINGENT CUTS IN THE STAFF OF USIS-GEORGETOWN, WHICH NUMBERS ELEVEN LOCAL EMPLOYEES.

6. THE ANNOUNCED CUT COMES AT A TIME WHEN THE VENEZUELAN AND BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENTS HAVE INCREASED THEIR EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL EFFORTS IN SURINAM. THE GOV HAS JUST GRANTED A NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDY IN VENEZUELA AND IS CONTINUING A HIGH LEVEL OF CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS. THE GOB HAS, FOR THE FIRST TIME, ALSO BECOME ACTIVE IN THIS AREA. A SERIES OF BRAZILIAN CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS IS ABOUT TO BEGIN AND THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BRAZILIANS ARE ALSO PUSHING THE PORTUGUESE LANGUAGE. AS A RESULT OF THEIR EFFORTS PORTUGUESE HAS RECENTLY BEEN INCLUDED IN THE SURINAM SCHOOL CURRICULUM. IN ADDITION, THE INDIAN CONSUL GENERAL RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THE OPENING OF AN INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER IN SURINAM.

7. I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT WE MUST NECESSARILY MATCH THE EFFORTS OF OTHER COUNTRIES IN SURINAM. HOWEVER, THE ACTIVITIES

OF THESE OTHER COUNTRIES, NONE OF WHICH HAS ANYTHING APPROACHING THE LEVEL OF U.S. INTERESTS IN SURINAM, ARE INDICATORS OF THE IMPORTANCE THESE COUNTRIES ATTACH TO ENSURING THEIR CULTURAL PRESENCE IN SURINAM. FURTHERMORE, BECAUSE THE U.S. ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN SURINAM IS SO MUCH LARGER THAN THAT OF OTHER COUNTRIES, THE VIRTUAL ABOLITION OF U.S. CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL AND INFORMATION SERVICES, AT A TIME WHEN OTHER COUNTRIES ARE INCREASING THEIRS, IS LIKELY TO CREATE A PUBLIC RELATIONS PROBLEM.

8. SO FAR, MAINLY THROUGH OUR LOCAL USIS EMPLOYEE, WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO MAINTAIN AN EFFECTIVE BUT LOW PROFILE PROGRAM WHICH HAS SERVED U.S. INTERESTS WELL. THE EMPLOYEE MAINTAINS DAY TO DAY WORKING RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE PRESS, RADIO, AND TV, PROVIDES TESTING AND COUNSELING SERVICES TO THE INCREASING NUMBER OF STUDENTS PROCEEDING TO THE U.S., ACTIVELY ENCOURAGES AND OBTAINS MATERIALS FOR ENGLISH TEACHING PROGRAMS, AND HAS BEEN MOST IMPORTANT IN HELPING TO PROGRAM CULTURAL PRESENTATIONS. HE HAS RECENTLY BEEN ASSIGNED THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SUPPORTING THE POST'S COMMERCIAL PROMOTION PROGRAM, WHICH WILL ENTAIL PREPARATION OF THE POST'S MONTHLY COMMERCIAL BULLETIN. ALL OF THESE ACTIVITIES ARE IMPORTANT TO THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF COUNTRY OBJECTIVES. ABOLITION OF THE POSITION WILL MEAN A CESSATION, TOTAL OR IN PART, OF THESE ACTIVITIES AND WILL AMOUNT TO A SHARP RESTRICTION IN OVERALL U.S. PROGRAMS.

9. I HOPE THAT USIA WILL SEE FIT TO REVERSE ITS DECISION, WHICH I STRONGLY BELIEVE IS ILL-ADVISED. I REGRET THAT I WAS GIVEN NO OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS MY VIEWS PRIOR TO THE TAKING OF THIS DECISION.
JOHNSTON

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